

Message Text

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42

ACTION EUR-08

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 EURE-00 NSC-05 NSCE-00 PM-03

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FM AMEMBASSY LISBON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4456

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMCONSUL OPORTO

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

USMISSION NATO

DIA WASHDC

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

S E C R E T LISBON 5777

LIMDIS

EO 11652: XGDS-4

TAGS: PINT, PO

SUBJ: COPCON COMMANDER AND RADIO AND TV INTERVENTION

REF: (A) LISBON 5746 DTG 301518Z SEP 75; (B) LISBON 5724

DTG 291824Z SEP 75 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: HIGH PS OFFICIAL TOLD AMBASSADOR THAT COPCON HEAD BG OTELO CARVALHO ON NIGHT OF SEPT 29/30 ACCEPTED INVITATION FROM ULTRA-LEFT FUR TO REPLACE AZEVEDO. WHEN OTELO GOT TO PRESIDENTIAL PALACE, AZEVEDO ENDED THE AFFAIR BY INSTRUCTING ANTUNES TO "THROW THE FOOL OUT." WHETHER THIS ACCOUNT IS TRUE OR NOT, OTELO'S AMBIGUOUS ROLE IN PRESENT CONFRONTATION HAS COME TO SYMBOLIZE STRUGGLE BETWEEN PRIME MINISTER AND FORCES OF DISORDER LED BY ULTRA-LEFT, ABETTED BY PCP. END SUMMARY

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1. HIGH LEVEL SOCIALIST PARTY OFFICIAL GAVE AMBASSADOR FOLLOW-

ING ACCOUNT OF THE EVENTS SURROUNDING COPCON HEAD BG OTELO SARAIVA DE CARVALHO'S VISIT TO PRESIDENTIAL PALACE ON NIGHT SEPTEMBER 29/30.

2. AFTER HIS MEETING WITH MEDIA REPS (REFTEL A) AT THE DOWNTOWN HEADQUARTERS OF THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION, OTELO MET WITH CROWD OF ABOUT 3000 ULTRA-LEFT FUR SUPPORTERS WAITING OUTSIDE THE MINISTRY. FUR OFFERED OTELO THE PRESIDENCY IF HE WOULD ACCOMPANY THEM TO THE PRESIDENTIAL PALACE AND DEMAND AZEVEDO'S RESIGNATION. OTELO AGREED.

3. ANTUNES WAS AT THE PALACE WHEN OTELO SHOWED UP, AND TOLD PRESIDENT OF OTELO'S INTENTION. AZEVEDO'S REACTION TO OTELO'S DEMAND WAS TO SAY "THROW THAT FOOL OUT."

4. COMMENT: SUBSTANCE OF THIS ACCOUNT WAS CONFIRMED BY PPD MINISTER OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS SA BORGES, WHO SAID INCIDENT WAS BECOMING WELL KNOWN IN GOVERNMENT CIRCLES. WE NOTE THAT PS AND PPD HAVE STRONG INTEREST IN DISCREDITING OTELO. IN ANY CASE, EVEN NEWS STORIES AGREE OTELO DID NOT SEE PM WHEN HE WENT TO PALACE.

5. WHETHER TRUE OR NOT, COUP VERSION WILL BE ACCEPTED BY MANY BECAUSE IT IS CONSISTENT WITH OTELO'S CHARACTER AND BEHAVIOR. A MAN WITHOUT POLITICAL BELIEFS OF HIS OWN, WHO FOR SOME REASON HAS GOTTEN HIMSELF TIED UP WITH THE ULTRA-LEFT, OTELO LOOKS MORE AND MORE THE FOOL. MINISTER OF EXTERNAL COMMERCE CAMPINOS WAS QUOTED IN SEPTEMBER 29 EVENING PAPER AS SAYING OTELO IS "A COWBOY IN A WESTERN WHERE THE HORSE IS THE STAR." ALTHOUGH THE OUTSPOKEN CAMPINOS HAS SINCE DENIED HE EVER SAID IT (HE PROBABLY DID), THE HARM IS ALREADY DONE. UNTIL RECENTLY, NEWSPAPER WOULD NOT HAVE DARED PRINT SUCH A QUOTE ABOUT THE HERO OF APRIL 25.

6. CONFRONTATION BETWEEN AZEVEDO ATTEMPTING TO ASSERT GOVERNMENT'S AUTHORITY AND RESISTANCE TO THIS MOVE BY ULTRA-LEFT, QUIETLY ABETTED BY THE COMMUNISTS, HAS NOW FOCUSED ON OTELO. OTELO, WHO VACILLATED BETWEEN SUPPORT AND OPPOSITION TO THE ANTUNES GROUP; WHO IS THE SECURITY CHIEF OF THE NATION, YET CAVED INTO A MOB AND RELEASED THE TWO
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SOLDIERS FROM PRISON; WHO IGNORED THE PLEAS OF FOREIGN MINISTER ANTUNES TO PROTECT THE SPANISH EMBASSY AND ALLOWED IT TO BE SACKED WITHOUT INTERFERENCE FROM HIS TROOPS; AND WHO WAS UNABLE OR UNWILLING TO GET HIS TROOPS TO CARRY OUT THE PRIME MINISTER'S ORDERS CONCERNING THE RADIO AND TV OCCUPATION; IS NOW SQUARELY ON THE SPOT WITH HIS ALLEGED ATTEMPT TO OVERTHROW THE PRESIDENT--A TALE THAT IS CIRCULATING RAPIDLY IN LISBON RUMOR MILL.

7. AZEVEDO HAS SAID THAT HE IS PREPARED TO FIRE OTELO IF NECESSARY (REFTEL B). THE CREATION OF THE MILITARY INTERVENTION GROUP (AMI) LOOKED LIKE A TYPICAL PORTUGUESE TACTIC TO PUSH OTELO OUT WITHOUT ACTUALLY APPEARING TO DO SO. OTELO IS ON SHAKY GROUNDS AND MAY FEEL STRONG INCENTIVES TO LOOK FOR SUPPORT FROM THE ULTRA-LEFT. HAVING ALREADY BURNED HIS BRIDGES WITH THE ANTUNES GROUP, THE DEMOCRATIC PARTIES, AND THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT THROUGH HIS ACTIONS AND WORDS, OTELO HAS NOWHERE ELSE TO GO.

8. FOOL OR NOT, OTELO PROVED HIMSELF VERY FAST ON HIS FEET DURING THE APRIL 25 REVOLT WHEN HIS AD HOC HANDLING OF MILITARY TAKEOVER OVERCAME A LOT OF POOR PLANNING. OTELO STILL COUNTS ON A GOOD BIT OF SUPPORT AT THE SOLDIER AND SERGEANT LEVEL OF THE ARMED FORCES AND MIGHT BE BACKED BY HIS NEW FOUND FRIENDS ON THE FAR LEFT IF A DIRECT ATTEMPT WERE MADE TO OUST HIM.
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